

National Aeronautics and
Space Administration
Office of the Administrator
Washington, DC 20546-0001



February 28, 2003

Admiral Harold Gehman, USN (Ret.)
Chairman
Columbia Action Investigation Board
16850 Saturn Lane
Houston, Texas 77058

Dear Admiral Gehman:

While I understand the purpose of your letter of February 25, 2003, I am convinced this course of action will be viewed as prejudging the facts before the investigation is complete. Despite your assurances that no conclusions have been made arising from the facts of the investigation at this time, simply reassigning personnel will not accomplish your stated goal. Moreover, new personnel could be subjected to the same appearance of conflict in the future and I will not submit anyone to this treatment.

However, since your investigation has matured, it is apparent that our original structure to support the investigation needs to transition as well. Therefore, we intend to reorganize our efforts to interface better with the structure of the Board. To that end, we plan to establish an interface mechanism with the three subdivisions of your Board for materials, operations, and technology.

Our Task Force will facilitate these new interfaces. Specifically, we will assign professionals from outside the shuttle program management structure to lead these efforts. Please anticipate that in the next few days ahead that we will accomplish this transition.

Cordially,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Sean O'Keefe". The signature is stylized with a large, sweeping "S" and a prominent "O".

Sean O'Keefe
Administrator